

Acalanes and Miramonte Mock Trial teams take second and third in academic event

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“As like numerous other counties in California, this was a challenging year for our High School Mock Trial program,” said Contra Costa County Superintendent of Schools Lynn Mackey. “Due to COVID-19, this was the first time in 40 years that we were not able to hold our trials in one of the Martinez courthouses, but instead held the competitions via Zoom meetings. This year’s Mock Trial success was because of a group effort between our volunteer judges and attorneys and our staff, as well as the patient and dedicated team coaches and their determined

students.”

The honored guest speaker, Judge Hardie, told the audience, “I’m so pleased that we didn’t let COVID-19 get in the way of our historic and annual tradition. We are so proud of our longstanding partnership with the Mock Trial program. Here at the county’s Superior Court, Mock Trials is one of our favorite times of the year. And, I heard so many wonderful stories from this year’s volunteering judges. They all agreed about how seamless the trials went this year, especially adapting the competition from our physical courtrooms to virtual courtrooms. The students did not

miss a beat!”

This year’s case, *People v. Croddy*, was the trial of Lee Croddy who hosts a popular YouTube channel called The Right Choice of News (RCN). Croddy was charged with two counts: (1) aiding and abetting in the commission of first-degree burglary by another, and (2) accessory after the fact. This case also featured a pre-trial argument on the Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination and as set forth in *Miranda v. Arizona*.

Since the beginning of the school year, teams of high school students worked with teacher coaches and volunteer coaches to prepare their ver-

sion of the criminal case, from both the prosecution and defense perspectives. Students assumed the roles of trial attorneys, pre-trial motion attorneys, witnesses, clerks, bailiffs, artists, and court journalists. During the Zoom meetings, Mock Trial judges and attorneys scored the students’ presentations and provided immediate feedback.

Approximately 60 Bay Area practicing and retired attorneys and sworn judges volunteered their time and expertise to serve as Mock Trial attorney scorers and judges. These volunteers represented judges from the Contra Costa County Superior Courts, and

attorney scorers included attorneys from Bay Area county District Attorney and Public Defender offices, the State Attorney General’s Office, and the California Department of Justice. Also serving as attorney scorers, were nonprofit, public, private, and corporate attorneys.

California High will represent Contra Costa County at the California State Mock Trial competition, March 18-22.

For all the team and individual results, visit the Contra Costa County Office of Education’s Mock Trial results at www.cccoe.k12.ca.us/programs_for_parents_students/academic_events/mock_trial

Budding photographer turns a robbery into an opportunity

Miramonte senior Nejala Ackdoe-Pagey has been a photographer since she was little, using her dad’s old Canon cameras and parents’ phones to capture every detail of family trips.

“I got my own Canon camera at age 11 and continued to take photos around the world, hoping to preserve the wonderful memories,” she said. Ackdoe-Pagey turned her love of photography into a way to express herself artistically and capture the beauty of nature from each place she visited. She wants to pursue a career as an environmental photojournalist, but a recent car robbery of some of her coveted camera equipment made her

change course.

Ackdoe-Pagey decided to sell travel postcards as a way to earn money to replace the items that were stolen, with her top priority being to buy a brand new camera. “As an avid hiker, experienced traveler, passionate historian, language-lover, seasoned artist, and a sustainability advocate who is just getting started, I want to use the power of photography to make a difference,” she said.

You can visit www.naturenotes-bynej.com to order a 10-pack of postcards.

— J. Wake



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